

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Flexer and Representative Blumenthal, Vice-Chairs Senator Slap and Representative Morin-Bello, Ranking Members Senator Sampson and Representative Mastrofrancesco, and Distinguished Members of the GAE Committee:

I support S.B. No. 1064, H.B. No. 5004, S.J. No. 29, and H.J. No. 1. I also conditionally support S.B. No. 1057 and H.B. No. 6693. In the 2022 referendum, Connecticut voters wholeheartedly supported the concept of early voting by approving a change to our state constitution to allow it. It is now time for you, our legislators, to enact the laws necessary to make early voting a reality.

To illustrate the need, I will recall my own experience a few years ago: I gave birth to our son in the evening of May 14th; our town's budget referendum was May 16th that year. Mindful that the bond funding for school improvements that would benefit our newborn was on that ballot, on May 16th, the day I was sent home from the hospital, I walked slowly and painfully into the polling location to cast my vote. Early voting would have been a most welcome option that year—and is vital for people who work multiple jobs, commute long distances out of town or have elder-care or childcare responsibilities that keep them away from the polls during the current limited voting day and hours.

Two weeks of early voting, and permitting voting on weekends and outside of normal business hours—these are possible. Funding for personnel, technology and voter education needs to be figured into the legislation. For example, cities and towns struggle to keep in top condition their 20+-year-old tabulators, as the manufacturer is no longer in business and spare parts are scarce. Election officials will need new procedures and equipment to enable fast, secure updates to voter registration and ballot completion information.

Connecticut is among the wealthiest states in the country and one of the smallest. More than 40 states nationwide, many with larger populations and geography and fewer resources, have implemented early voting. Their experiences should provide plenty of lessons learned and blueprints to facilitate our state's cost-effective adoption of early voting.

Finally, no-excuse absentee balloting needs to be an option. Connecticut voters and election officials proved during the pandemic that they were, respectively, capable of properly completing and securely processing absentee ballots. This option will, like early voting, enable more voters to cast their votes--a hallmark of a healthy, thriving democracy. (There is no need to make public the names of those who request an absentee ballot.)

Thank you for considering these comments as you formulate legislation to make early voting and no-excuse absentee balloting a reality in Connecticut.

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